

# 'GHOST' WAS A GIRL, DR. PRINCE REPORTS

## Investigator Thinks Mary Ellen Started Mysterious Fires at Caledonia Mills, N. S.

### FOUND INFLAMMABLE LIQUID

#### He Says She Has Had Dream States—Reporter Did Au- tomatic Writing.

*Special to The New York Times.*

HALIFAX, N. S., March 15.—Dr. Walter Franklin Prince of the American Research Society of New York, who has been investigating stories of ghostly manifestations at the home of Alexander MacDonald at Caledonia Mills, N. S., made public here tonight his report on the subject.

His conclusion is that there was no ghost, but that the mysterious starting of fires in the house was due to human agency. He thinks that they were the work of Mary Ellen, the young adopted daughter of the MacDonalds, but says she is not mentally culpable, being "exceedingly young for her years" in development of mind.

Mary Ellen has had dream states and may have been in an "altered state of consciousness" when the acts were committed, Dr. Prince says. He indicates that this condition may have been the cause also of the braiding of the cows' tails and the shifting of live stock. It is possible, he says, that a discarnate intelligence impelled her.

The girl is not held responsible for the slapping of Harold Whidden, a reporter of *The Halifax Herald*, and P. C. Carroll, a detective, which they say took place in the house. Dr. Prince's report is taken to suggest that they may have only thought they were slapped or may have slapped each other.

#### Fires in Mary Ellen's Reach.

The report reads in part;

"My visit of six nights and five days at the house in the vicinity of Antigonish, N. S., which has attracted so much attention, ended Monday morning.

"Apart from the statements of Signor Marconi and other experts, I have proved that the wireless waves theory cannot be true unless the waves are endowed with intelligence to know just when people are in the house, with a dislike for the upper part of the room walls, with a repugnance to having persons see them break out into flames, and with ability to transport cushions from one room to another, and the like.

"The fires were undoubtedly set by human hands, judging by the unmistakable signs left in the house. The burns are never found on the wall paper higher than the reach of a person five feet tall, which is the height of a girl in the family. Over the bed which fills one end of the room they are never higher than such a person kneeling could reach, and in muddy or dewy weather one would not wish to stand on the bed.

"Other slightly higher places on the woodwork were always set on fire by pieces of cloth, which could easily have been tossed.

"In a recess over a door where a fire occurred were found the fragments of a glove, undisturbed, and in the midst of them a match, where it could not have been prior to the fire, nor could it have been placed there after its extinguishment. The fires avoided starting before witnesses, and there was no occult reason for so doing—and avoided all parts of the dining room and parlor visible from the meeting place in the kitchen. An odorless, inflammable liquid was found in a bottle on a beam, which produced the described effects on wet paper. Other indicia were found pointing to the same conclusion, namely, that a person five feet tall secretly performed the acts as opportunity offered.

#### Had Chance to Move Cushion.

"The various witnesses were undoubtedly honest in believing that the acts could not have been thus performed, but my acquaintance with errors of observation and of memory on the part of intelligent persons dealing with a large number of details in a matter quite new to them has often demonstrated that such testimony may be vitally in error. For example, it was thought that a cushion which 'some time before' had been put upstairs was placed on the bedstead downstairs by occult agency. But it appears that the next preceding fire was upstairs, making it likely that an opportunity was found in the interval to bring the cushion down.

"But I am emphatically of the opinion that the girl was not mentally culpable. She is mentally exceedingly young for her years and within the past year has had singular 'dream' states, from which it was difficult to rouse her. It is very probable that she was the victim of altered states.

"There was wind during the night which I passed alone in the house and I examined the loose board which some one suggested vibrated, and there was no movement nor sound. My own personal study of a series of raps and other sounds which lasted for months

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In my own house makes the testimony of Messrs. Whidden and Carroll quite credible, to the effect that the sounds were not from ordinary causes. For reasons which I cannot here give in detail, I regard the actual sensations which both had an effect upon their consciousness, not of the usual kind, and due to causes little understood.

## Automatic Writing by Reporter.

"This new outbreak would be consistent with the theory that the girl was prompted by a discarnate agency which now found a new outlet owing to a peculiar quality residing in one of the men, probably Mr. Whidden, which quality has been given the psychic. In that case Mr. Carroll also heard and felt it because he was with Mr. Whidden, who was the human wire, so to speak, through which the forces or influence, whether an unknown physical one or some other, passed. I have known other cases where persons shared in the witnessing of phenomena only when a particular person was present.

"I am not arguing for this theory, only stating it as it is intelligently held. But consistent with it would be the fact that during my stay at the house an experiment which I performed, partly to pass away the time, resulted in a sudden and volcanic outbreak of automatic writing on the part of Mr. Whidden, during which an ordinarily mild gentleman became strangely imperative and like another person, the writing claiming that the communicator caused the fires, which, of course, he might have done through the girl, according to the theory of obsession.

"The fact of the automatic writing and its contents also are not evidence for or against the theory, but it is a fact that many such writings contain clear evidence, whether of spirit communication or of telepathy, which embraces the world like a system of telegraph wires. This is a plain statement of the logical issue, but it is interesting to note that while this writing came un-

expectedly to Mr. Whidden, four succeeding attempts when his mind was full of expectation resulted in not a single word, which is not quite what we would expect of the subconscious."

The slapping experiences, Dr. Prince says, were "probably of a supernormal character, which does not necessarily imply that the supernormal cause was spiritualistic." They may have been due to a "psycho-physiological cause, which is perfectly natural though imperfectly normal."

## Thinks Girl Released Cattle.

Dr. Prince thus states his general conclusions:

"To sum up, in my judgment the fires were caused by the hands of the girl in the family, and presumably also the loosening of cattle, &c., were performed by her at unnoticed opportunities, although I do not expect the neighborhood ever to credit this.

"The acts were, however, almost certainly without culpability on her part, owing to her having been temporarily in abnormal states of consciousness. Possibly, but not probably, there was instigation of the acts by a discarnate intelligence through telepathic contact upon her mind."